

Explain the Personification

Personification is a figurative element that attributes human thoughts, actions, characteristics or emotions to something that is not human.

Example: The sad clouds were ready to spill their tears upon the funeral procession.
Clouds cannot be sad, nor do they have tears.

Part I. Simple Sentences

Identify and explain the meaning of the personification in the sentences below.

1) The feathers danced in the wind. _____

2) The clock chimed an anxious warning at a quarter to midnight, alerting the children that the deadline had almost arrived. _____

3) The flies buzzed with regret as the lion shook its head. _____

4) The night was sullen and angry; it became darker with each step Maria took. _____

Part II. In Literature

Read the following passage from “O! Pioneers” by Willa Cather. Write three examples of the use of personification.

“We hadn’t any of us much to do with it, Carl. The land did it. It had its little joke. It pretended to be poor because nobody knew how to work it right; and then, all at once, it worked itself. It woke up out of its sleep and stretched itself, and it was so big, so rich, that we suddenly found we were rich, just from sitting still.”

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

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Part I. Simple Sentences

Student answers will vary. Examples of correct answers:

Identify and explain the meaning of the personification in the sentences below.

- 1) The feathers danced in the wind. The sentence uses personification to illustrate how the feathers moved in the wind. Feathers have no legs, so they cannot dance.
- 2) The clock chimed an anxious warning at a quarter to midnight, alerting the children that the deadline had almost arrived. This clock is given human attributes in this sentence. A clock is a machine. It cannot give a warning or an alert, nor can it feel anxious.
- 3) The flies buzzed with regret as the lion shook its head. The flies are given the human emotion of regret. Flies do not feel human emotion.
- 4) The night was sullen and angry; it became darker with each step Maria took. Personification is used in this sentence to characterize night. Night is not human, so it cannot feel sullen or angry.

Part II. In Literature

Student's choice. The examples of personification in the passage are underlined.

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- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____